

has been happening now. I don't think this is an appropriate time to voice lots of criticism, but when we see how difficult it is to move positive things through this institution, it is hard to understand, because the fundamentals that ROBERT C. BYRD brought to his work were that we were here to serve the public. That was the mission.

Rather than standing in the way of permitting things to be considered—things of value—perhaps we ought to have a BYRD lecture to the Senate—at large every now and then and let someone who knew him or studied him talk about what he brought to the Senate, in addition to extraordinary leadership; someone who could talk about the degree of collegiality that is necessary for us to consider things—serious things—and to get them done.

Senator BYRD recently said—and he said this on a regular basis:

The world has changed. But our responsibilities, our duties as Senators have not changed. We have a responsibility, a duty to the people to make our country a better place.

It would be fitting if in the shadow of his passing that we could take a sledgehammer to partisan gridlock, put the unnecessary rancor aside and start functioning in a deliberative fashion once again.

I thank you, Senator ROBERT C. BYRD, for what you gave to us and gave to this country. All of it will not be recognized in these moments. But as history is reviewed, people will remember—I hope they do—that even when he made a mistake, a serious mistake in his early days—when he was not eager to support desegregation; that he should not have abided with segregationists; that this country belonged to all the people and no one should be discriminated against—that one can be forgiven with good deeds after some bad ones. And he redeemed himself so nobly, so wonderfully.

So we say, as we have been for these days, thank you, ROBERT C. BYRD. We loved being with you, and we will miss you.

Mr. WEBB. Mr. President, I have not yet had the opportunity on the floor to express my regret for the passing of Senator ROBERT BYRD and my incredible respect for the service he gave our country.

I was only able to serve with Senator BYRD at the twilight of his career. I knew him in my capacities as Assistant Secretary and then Secretary of the Navy years ago, and I admired him for many years as an individual of fierce intellect. He was a strong proponent of the balance of power, particularly protective of the powers of the U.S. Congress as they relate to the executive branch, which is an area I have also focused on over the years.

Senator BYRD had great love for the people of Appalachia. He was their greatest champion. He was a self-made man in every sense of the word—self-made economically, born an orphan, and self-made in terms of his own education.

I recall that when I was Secretary of the Navy, I had the authority to name various combatants, and I named a submarine the “USS West Virginia.” When I made the statement about why I named it that, I pointed out that West Virginia, in every war in the 20th century, ranked either first or second in terms of its casualty rate. He was someone who never forgot the contributions of the people of that much-maligned State to the well-being and greatness of our country. He left his mark on all of us, and I would be remiss if I didn't express my regret in his passing.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to our departed Senate Dean, ROBERT C. BYRD of West Virginia. Senator BYRD served in this Chamber longer than any Senator in history, 50½ years. Combined with 6 prior years in the House of Representatives, Senator BYRD's service spanned nearly a quarter of the history of the Republic, from the Truman administration to the Obama one, longer than the span of my life.

To serve with Senator BYRD, as was my privilege for too short a time, was to serve with a giant of the Senate, an apotheosis of a long-ago age when oratory was an art. How fortunate I was to sit on the Budget Committee several chairs away from the man who wrote the Budget Act. I will never forget a Budget Committee hearing last year at which, with 35 years of hindsight, Senator BYRD reviewed the very budget process that he had designed. On that February morning, Senator BYRD delighted in describing his crafting of the budget process and its implementation and evolution over three and a half decades.

Tomorrow, for the first time since 1959 when ROBERT C. BYRD was a 40-year-old first-year Senator, a departed Member of this body will lie in repose in its Chamber. The tribute will surely be fitting, as the Senate's most senior Member occupies the floor one final time.

The man will be missed, but his legacy will continue to guide this institution for generations to come, and the institution to whose principles and welfare he dedicated his life, the U.S. Senate, will endure with his lasting imprint upon it.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I regret that on June 28, 2010, I was unable to vote on the confirmation of Gary Scott Feinerman, of Illinois, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District because my flight from Kansas City was delayed. I wish to address this vote, so that the people of the great State of Kansas, who elected me to serve them as U.S. Senator, may know my position. I would have voted in favor of this confirmation.

TRIBUTE TO COLONEL PHILIP C. SKUTA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize COL Phil Skuta, USMC, who will complete his tour of duty with the U.S. Marine Corps' Office of Legislative Affairs on July 15, 2010. In his role as the director of the Marine Corps' Senate Liaison Office, he has provided excellent support by ensuring the smooth and timely passage of information from the Marine Corps to Senators and their staffs. His sense of duty and responsibility contributed to a successful relationship between the U.S. Senate and the U.S. Marine Corps. His dedication to serving the U.S. Senate will be missed.

A native of Williamsport, PA, Colonel Skuta attended the University of Pittsburgh and received a commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1987. His career as a Marine officer has been varied and admirable. Prior to his assignment to the U.S. Senate, he served on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in the Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate. Before that, he led 1,200 marines, soldiers, and sailors in combat in Iraq in 2004 as a battalion task force commander. Over the past 24 months, his excellent work, leadership of his liaison team, and example of professionalism have served the Senate well and reflected credit on the U.S. Marine Corps.

Upon his arrival as director of the U.S. Senate Marine Corps Liaison Office, Colonel Skuta assumed and upheld the distinguished standard set by his predecessors. His approach to resolving complex issues allowed him to advise and inform Members and their staffs of Marine Corps plans, policies, programs, and worldwide activities. Despite the fluidity of legislative process, Colonel Skuta established and developed productive working relationships through engagement opportunities.

As liaison officer to the Senate, Colonel Skuta represented the Marine Corps on all Marine-related matters and effectively articulated the Marine Corps' most difficult and challenging legislative initiatives to Members and staff. He has been an integral player in maintaining effective relationships between the Marine Corps, my colleagues in the Senate, professional committee staff, and personal staff members. In particular, he responded to hundreds of congressional inquiries, ranging from such sensitive issues as notification of combat casualties from the Afghanistan and Iraq campaigns to providing timely information on the operation, organization, and budget of the Marine Corps. He also planned and executed dozens of international congressional delegations. I had the pleasure of traveling on two of these congressional delegations with Colonel Skuta and was impressed with his service to the Members of the Senate. He reflected well on his service at numerous Marine Corps and joint social events on Capitol Hill. Among others, these events included